South Island Drama Festival Opens

By BERT BINNY

COMEDIES TO THE FORE

WHILE the precise point at which drama ends and comedy begins has not as yet been clearly determined—mainly because the best of the former is almost never pure — the forthcoming Southern Vancouver Island Drama Festival would seem to lean ever so slightly in the funny bone direction.

Of the 10 plays to be performed, six are vehicles of objective enjoyment, that is, with characters and situations to be laughed at rather than sympathized with.

The remaining four are the opposite. The program opens on Wednesday at Oak Bay Junior High School.

The Book of Genesis has been tapped to provide the bases for two of the plays, Christopher Morley's "East of Eden," to be presented by St. Luke's Players, and "Before the Flood," by the Victoria Theatre Guild.

"East of Eden" is directed by Stan Wade with Harry Lukey as Adam, Peggy Small as Eve, Don Hart as Cain and Barbara Grant as Cain's wife. While it is played straight the overall effect is, to say the least, a whimsical one.

"Before the Flood" is just what the title suggests, a depiction of events surrounding the building of the Ark.

The part of Noah is played by John Martin who won both the Island and the Southern Island awards for the best actor in 1958 when he played Didymus Hippocrates in "The Ass and the Philosophers." Noah's wife, Hannah, is Dorothy House. In addition, Shem, Ham and Japheth, Ralph Vipond, Michael Williams and Horace Mayea; their wives, Ingrid Escher, Sheila Brown and Dede Bumpus, along with two neighbors, not at the time of writing, definitely cast, are also involved. The director is Anthony Burton.

But St. Luke's Players have another entry as well as "East of Eden." This is the drama, "Wayside War," to be directed by Joan Key.

The two leading characters here are the rather pompous Colonel, played by John Drean, and Alicia Pemberton, Belle Davies. It is not possible to say much more without revealing the denouement of the whole story which would be a pity for more reasons than one. Sufficient it is to say that the combination of courage, wilyness and bluff is not invariably a male monopoly. Alicia has it.

Shades of Alfred Hitchcock! The Peninsula Players of Sidney, an accomplished and versatile lot, present a play called "Suspicion." Oh, yes! It is a murder mystery complete with messy bloodstains, a missing girl and a trunk (large enough for any reasonable corpse!) that just isn't where it should be. There are also two newspaper reporters—imaginative, inquisitive and, therefore, largely fictional souls—who nose avidly around and build up the jolliest sensations.

These two lurid characters are played by Margaret Dixon and Ken Smith with Pat Montgomery and Otto Plaschko completing the cast. Ailsa Rothery is the director.

What a change from hilarious "The Fish" of 1957 and gently delightful "The Twelve Pound Look" of 1958!

The Columbine Club, with co-directors Vera Trueman and John Poulton, present an Anton Chekov farce, "The Boor," or, alternatively, "The Bear." "The Boor" seems to be a more recent translation of a Russian word formerly rendered as "The Bear."

The play was written in 1888, one of Chekov's earliest successes but always regarded with affectionate amusement by the author.

However, avoiding all argument as to whether bears are boors or vice-versa, the play features Cliff Clarke, a former winner of the best actor award, Jim Pickford and Ann Chapman.

The pen of Anton Chekov provides another festival entry also with the Fireside Players of Metropolitan Church presenting his "The Anniversary." This, like "The Bear," is lusty farce.

Directed by Margaret Bertie, the cast includes Claudia Spouse, Betty Anderson and Gordon Courtenay.

Mr. Courtenay, incidentally, also appears as a playwright. Nor is this the first time. His "Sultan of the Fraser" was presented last year. Now it is "Prisoner of Love" or "The Tennis Bum," another bright comedy.

Charles Johnston-Watson is Marshall Porter, the 'tennis bum' in person: Shirley Nelson is Fanny Vogel and Brenda Forbes is Lorna June. There are several additional minor parts and the production is directed by Heather Telfer.

BELLE DAVIES plays the resourceful Alicia Pemberton in St. Luke's Players' production of "Wayside War."

JOHN MARTIN twice best actor in 1958, appears as Noah in the Theatre Guild's "Before the Flood".

MARGARET DIXON is a reporter in murder mystery, "Suspicion," to be staged by the Peninsula Players of Sidney.

Thornton Wilder's very delightful "The Happy Journey" is to be presented by the Royal Jubilee Hospital Student Nurses's Drama Club. Returning as the director is the talented Pauline Morrish while the cast is composed of Diane Thomson as Father, Carol Steele as Mother, Caroline Kirby as the Daughter, Donna Rigby as Beulah, Lynne Harwood as the Stage Manager and Pam Martin as Arthur Kirby.

The St. Andrew's Cathedral Players who, unfortunately, have been in a state of retirement so far this season, are presenting a drama of the new India, "The Return of Chandra."

Lawrence Westendale directs a cast of seven with Paul Redchurch as Chandra, Ann Fleck as Maya, Barbara Brown as Sita, George Stevens as Peter, Beverly Fisher as Nellie, Fred McGrath as Durga and Norman Healey as Michael Loring.

Rounding out the three nights of competitive entertainment is "The Chairs," presented by the Intimate Stage.

"The Chairs is by a Roumanian expatriate now living in Paris, Eugene Ionesco. It is quite an experimental production in that the writer's approach to the stage is unusual.

Director and playing the Old Man is Tony Nicholson with Margaret Martin as the Old Woman and Jean Paul Destrube as the Orator.

The play is described as tragic farce and it was well received in London and New York.

The festival adjudicator is Mr. Anthony Holland who officiated last year at the Island finals in Duncan.

However, this year, Island finals are eliminated. The winning play this week goes straight to the provincial finals at Trail in May.

The program is as follows: Wednesday, 1. "Wayside War." 2. "Prisoner of Love." 3. "The Chairs." Thursday, 1. "Before the Flood," 2. "The Return of Chandra." 3. "The Bear." 4. "The Happy Journey." Friday, 1. "The Anniversary." 2. "Suspicion." 3. "East of Eden."

The Honor performance of the three best plays selected by the adjudicator takes place on Saturday, April 16, and all programs are at Oak Bay Junior High School.

Buying Bone China . . .

YOU BUY ART

By SHIRLEY FRY

This is another of the series of short stories behind renowned merchandise sold through Victoria shops.

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WHEN you choose a set of fine English bone china, you are buying more than just dishes—you are buying centuries of creative art that has been handed down from generation to generation and at one time could be afforded only by kings and nobility.

Because of the ingredients used and the craftsmen who blend them, this china can only be made in England. The calcined bone used is the English oxen bone. This bone has an exceptionally high calcine which gives a whiteness and strength that is only found in this particular bone china.

The special clay and stone is brought from Cornwall on the south coast of England all the way to Staffordshire, the heart of English pottery industry.

At the factories, the bone, clay, stone and pure silica are purified and mixed into a paste. This paste is presed by hand on a machine called a "jollie" or placed into moulds, then dried in special rooms.

After being fired in one of the numerous ovens, the china is dipped into a glass glaze and fired again. Skilled crafstmen all along the line constantly examine, grind and polish each piece as it goes through the different stages.

Decorating is done by transfers, printing or hand-enamelling and here is one art that is jealously guarded and passed from father to son. The third firing in the oven is to harden the decoration into the glaze.

From this stage, it is again carefully examined, wrapped and readied for shipping.

When you purchase your English bone china set, you will have something both precious and beautiful. You will want to treat it that way. Pottery men say "treat your china like you would your finest woollens and silks." With simple care, your English bone china will last for generations and be the pride of any household.